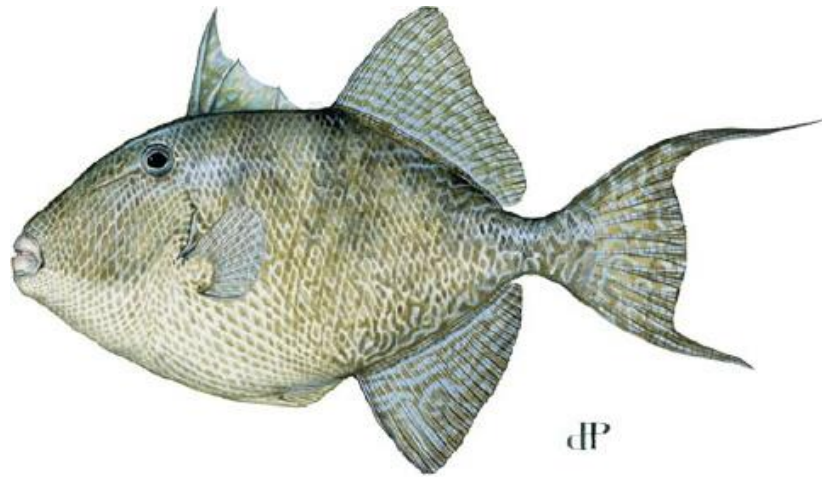


2017 RECREATIONAL FISHING CLOSURE FOR GRAY TRIGGERFISH IN GULF OF MEXICO FEDERAL WATERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

November 2016



Why will recreational fishing for gray triggerfish be closed in 2017?

- Gray triggerfish 2016 recreational landings exceeded the annual catch limit established by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council).
- The regulations require a payback of the overage the following year.
- The payback results in a zero harvest for 2017.
- Therefore, there will not be a recreational season for gray triggerfish in federal waters during 2017.

Why is the closure needed?

- The 2016 recreational annual catch limit was 201,223 pounds, and the annual catch target was 177,123 pounds.
- The 2016 recreational harvest of gray triggerfish is estimated to be 422,213 pounds; therefore, the 2016 harvest exceeded the annual catch limit by 221,213 pounds.
- The scheduled 2017 gray triggerfish annual catch limit was to be 241,200 pounds and the annual catch target was to be 217,100 pounds.
- The 221,213 pound overage will be deducted from the scheduled 2017 annual catch limit and target, resulting in a 2017 annual catch limit of 19,987 pounds, and a 2017 annual catch target of zero pounds.

What happens in 2018 ?

- Any landings greater than the 2017 adjusted ACL (19,987 pounds) will be subtracted from the scheduled 2018 ACL of 241,200 pounds.
- There could be landings should any of the Gulf States choose not to have regulations compatible with the federal water closure.

Population Status

- To recover the gray triggerfish population, a rebuilding plan was implemented in 2008, but recent information shows the population is not recovering adequately.
- The 2015 SEDAR 43 stock assessment of the gray triggerfish population indicated there were too few fish, which means they are being overfished.
- The Gulf Council is revising the plan to rebuild the gray triggerfish population.
- The updated rebuilding plan is expected to take effect in late summer 2017.

How are recreational landings estimated?

- Landings data are from:
 - Marine Recreational Information Program.
 - Southeast Fisheries Science Center Headboat survey.
 - Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Charter and private/rental creel survey.
 - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Creel Survey (LA Creel).
- These data are placed into approved scientific formulas to project landings.

What if the estimates are not correct and the 2017 annual catch target is greater than zero?

- NOAA Fisheries can open gray triggerfish fishing at a later date in 2017, and close harvest when the annual catch target is caught.

Why was the recreational fishery not closed sooner in 2016 to prevent such a large quota overage?

- Recreational gray triggerfish is closed every year in June and July to allow fish to spawn.
- The 2016 recreational fishing season in federal waters closed on June 1, 2016, as planned.
- During the closure, preliminary and projected gray triggerfish recreational landings were reviewed. The annual catch target was projected to have been met in mid-May.
- Therefore, the gray triggerfish recreational fishing was not re-opened after the end of the spawning closure.
- However, additional landings received after the closure due to open state seasons and late reporting resulted in the annual catch limit being exceeded.

What is the status of commercial fishing for gray triggerfish?

- The commercial quota for gray triggerfish is 60,900 pounds.
- Commercial gray triggerfish fishing is currently open and will close if the quota is projected to be caught.
- As of October 31, 2016, approximately 74 percent of the commercial quota has been caught.

Related Links and Information can be found on NOAA Fisheries Website:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2017/am46_gray_trigger/index.html